

The Case of the Chingford Skinhead: John White on Education and Special Obligations between Fellow Nationals

DAVID STEVENS

This article questions whether it is legitimate to propagate national sentiment and foster ties of nationality through school curricula. Against certain arguments for the ethical significance of nationality I question whether those who share a national identity have special moral obligations to members of their national group that they do not have to other persons. I argue that such ties of sentiment are unnecessary for achieving principled liberal goals, and that education within a liberal democracy should focus directly upon certain general moral principles, such as fairness, justice, and toleration. The recent Advisory Group on Citizenship's Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools (1998) similarly endorses, I argue, education focused upon general moral principles.

I. INTRODUCTION

In a recent article entitled 'Education and nationality' (1996) John White defends the claim that nationality and national sentiment deserve a greater emphasis in our educational curriculum than they currently receive. White makes this claim by arguing that an appropriately formed conception of nationality is not only compatible with a liberal (or socialist) framework, but that it is desirable both for reasons of identity and, instrumentally, for achieving other egalitarian distributive goals.

In making these claims White taps into the recent renewal of interest in the phenomenon of nationality initiated by political theorists such as David Miller (1988, 1995) and Yael Tamir (1993). These thinkers have sought to overturn the suspicion of nationality traditionally harboured by those on the political left, and to harness the motivational power of national ties in order to realise other egalitarian ends. In the light of his theoretical position concerning the merits of nationality for individual identity and social justice White discusses what is meant by British nationality, and explores the educational implications of an appropriately

(re)modelled nationality. In this article I argue that the basis upon which White invests nationality with ethical significance is mistaken. His argument, I contend, fails to show why specifically it is nationality that contributes to an individual's identity in a morally relevant manner, or why it should be thought to be instrumental in bringing about other liberal egalitarian goals. In particular I concentrate on the claims that possessing a national identity endows individuals with special moral obligations to their co-nationals. I argue that this idea of national obligations is susceptible to a criticism that renders the idea problematic.

This article has the following structure. Section II rehearses White's argument for the importance of nationality and the creation of special obligations. Section III argues that such a position fails to explain adequately how and why individuals come to have such obligations. I present my initial objection in the form of an example, the outcome of which suggests that the national obligation argument cannot rule out the possibility of obligations between individuals who are engaged in potentially illiberal practices. Section IV argues that a possible solution to this initial objection lies in recognising that any adequate explanation of special obligations must take account of the moral value of the group or relationship in question, though I argue that this may not be an option open to national obligations. Section V turns from critique to exposition and considers, in greater detail, the 'community of principle' that White views as the alternative to a community bound together by nationality. Section VI describes, *contra* White, the place that nationality should have in a national curriculum once its ethical significance has been rejected. Furthermore, I outline some of the possible implications for education of a community that is bound together by a commitment to general moral principles such as justice and fairness.

A note of caution. In what follows it is the ethical significance of nationality that is being questioned, not its historical significance.¹ This is a crucial distinction. I do not deny the historical importance (either good or ill) of nationality, nations, and the like, or the continued significance such concepts are likely to have. On this matter White and I are in full agreement. What is at issue here is the moral status that the idea of nationality has, and whether it is a valid aim to see part of the purpose of education as fostering and encouraging feelings of national sentiment. It is regarding this issue that I disagree with White.

II. NATIONAL COMMUNITY

This section outlines White's case for nationality and national obligations. White's defence of nationality rests on two intertwined theses. The first concerns identity, the second concerns obligations. The identity argument claims that as individuals we are, in part at least, constituted by our national identity. As White states: 'We need it [the national framework] to make sense of our lives, to help us toward a sense of who we are' (p. 331). By nationality and national sentiment White tells us he means not the repellent ideas of 'nationalism' or

'chauvinism' which haunt our history, and which promote the idea of 'the superiority of one's nation over other nations' (p. 328), but rather a love of one's nation in the way that one presumably loves one's family without considering it superior to other families (p. 328).

In defining what constitutes a nation for the purpose of the questions in hand White draws upon a passage from Miller (1988) concerning the shared beliefs that are necessary to determine what a nation is and what binds it together. These are,

a belief that each belongs together with the rest; that this association is neither transitory nor merely instrumental but stems from a long history of living together which (it is hoped and expected) will continue into the future; that the community is marked off from other communities by its members' distinctive characteristics; and that each member recognises a loyalty to the community, expressed in a willingness to sacrifice personal gain to advance its interests. We should add, as a final element, that the nation should enjoy some degree of political autonomy.² (p. 648)

The second part of White's argument is the claim that, as individuals who are members of a national group and who possess a national identity, we incur responsibilities to members of that group which we do not owe to other people in general. White echoes Miller in this common claim by those who defend the importance of nationality: 'In acknowledging a national identity, I am also acknowledging that I owe special obligations to fellow members of my nation which I do not owe to other human beings' (Miller, 1995, p. 49).

In a striking example Miller explains exactly what such a view might entail. If Miller came across two students both of whom needed hospital treatment (say, after some accident), and if one student (but not the other) were a member of Miller's college, then Miller feels justified in helping the student who is a member of his college prior to aiding the non-member (all else being equal): 'I ought to give priority to the one who belongs to my college, taking the other [to hospital] only if his need is considerably more urgent' (Miller, 1995, p. 66).

For White, as for Miller, such a view of special obligations is instrumentally valuable for realising other aims such as distributive justice:

In a liberal democracy, some way has to be found to motivate a sufficient number of citizens to favour redistribution, especially where it is against their financial interest to do this. If they feel themselves to be part of the same community as those in need, their emotional bonds with them may outweigh narrower considerations of advantage and disadvantage. National sentiment can help to provide this bonding. (White, p. 331)

And again: 'it is not enough for socialists — or, indeed, any non-socialists moved by the plight of their fellow citizens — to pin all their hopes on the institutions of the democratic state that can promote redistribution: for these to be able to do this, behind the state there has to be communal sentiment, the feeling that everybody's fate matters to each' (White, p. 331).

III. UNSAVOURY OUTCOMES: THE CASE OF THE CHINGFORD SKINHEAD

So far so good, and White's argument for national obligations has a certain amount of intuitive appeal. By drawing upon the idea that one can love one's nation in the same way that one loves one's family — without thinking it superior to other families — White draws an important analogy between the idea that we have certain obligations to family members in virtue of the relationships that hold between us, and the claim that this is also true of those who share the same nationality. These are obligations that we have either over and above or in preference to any obligations we might have to other people in general. Why, the defender of national obligations asks, should we not see nationality as contributing to our identity in the way that the family does, and endowing us with certain responsibilities towards those in our national group?

I intend to concentrate specifically on the stage of the argument concerning the generation of special obligations via group membership in order to expose what I believe to be a problem at the heart of the argument for national obligations.³ Consider, by way of introduction to my objection, the following example. Imagine an individual whom, for want of a better name, I shall call the Chingford Skinhead. Now the Chingford Skinhead holds certain racist and homophobic views. Moreover, the Chingford Skinhead is not alone in holding such views. Indeed, he identifies with a wider group of people (perhaps significantly wider) who also hold these views and who, in Caney's (1996) words, 'define themselves in terms of their membership,' and 'share a common set of beliefs and shared norms of custom and behaviour' (p. 127). According to the argument for nationality it follows that the Chingford Skinhead is under a moral responsibility, all else being equal, to aid other members of his group in preference to those outside the group.

What the example of the Chingford Skinhead illustrates is that when the sole criterion for special obligations is group membership then this creates the possibility of outcomes that lie uneasily within a liberal framework. Even groups whose practices we would consider to be amongst the most heinous possible could be said to create legitimate moral obligations between their members. The most immediate line of response available to the defender of nationality is to claim that there exists a distinction between the existence and the content of a relationship (such as group membership), and that the character of the relationship only legitimately affects the former and not the latter. Thus, the defender of nationality claims that membership is sufficient for obligations, but the content of such obligations is determined (in part at least) by other factors.⁴

Like Tamir, with whom White acknowledges 'many affinities' (p. 342, n. 2), White's argument maintains that group membership is the sole legitimate condition for special obligations, but that the content of such obligations will be limited by various other factors including universal moral principles. As Tamir states:

For example, members of the Mafia are bound by associative obligations to their fellow members, meaning that they have an obligation to attend to each other's needs, to protect each other, to support the families of those killed 'in action', and the like. These obligations are not ultimate, and there are sound moral reasons that could override them, but we cannot rule out their very existence. (Tamir, 1993, pp. 101–2)

Thus Tamir claims that group membership is sufficient to create binding moral obligations. These are obligations that individuals can rightly be castigated, frowned upon, or even punished for failing to fulfil. The Chingford Skinhead does, it would seem, have legitimate obligations to other members of his group, just as members of the Mafia do. What Tamir also claims, however, is that the content of these special obligations are limited to a concern for the well-being or welfare of other members. What limits these obligations is, according to Tamir, other moral considerations. Faced with the criticism that group membership as a sufficient condition for special obligations gives rise to the possibility of unsavoury identities and outcomes, Tamir claims that all else is rarely equal and that such obligations are outweighed or overridden by other moral reasons that figure in our calculations. White lends support to this by claiming that the feeling of superiority of one's nation and co-nationals 'should be condemned on the principle of universal equality of respect' (p. 328). I take it by this that White means if one's attachments to one's nation or co-nationals demand something that comes into conflict with other moral principles, such as the universal principle of equality of respect, or perhaps (human) rights, then such universal principles always win through.

White's argument (like Tamir's) depends, therefore, on moral principles external to the relationship in question in order to limit the content of the special obligations to which such relationships are said to give rise. Yet I do not believe it to be an adequate response to the objection of the Chingford Skinhead merely to claim that group membership is sufficient for creating special moral obligations so long as those obligations do not offend against other moral values. It is not an adequate response because there remains, I believe, the possibility that such a criterion for special obligations will mandate obligations between members of groups that are considered profoundly immoral.

This potential gap between special obligations and the dictates of morality can be seen via an extension of our previous example to a situation where all other things are equal; that is, where a group's practices do not offend against general moral principles. Imagine that our acquaintance the Chingford Skinhead happens upon the two injured students from Miller's example before Miller can ride to their rescue. Unfortunately the Chingford Skinhead has only enough money to help one of the students to get to hospital. Fortunately for one of the students he too is a racist. If matters had been different and the Chingford Skinhead possessed enough money to aid both then we might well say that if he is going to volunteer aid then equality of respect dictates that

he should aid both. By only having enough money to aid one he does not violate the other's claim to equality of respect. It is just unfortunate that there is insufficient money to go round. We would likely think it wrong if he refused to help one because he could not help both. Similarly, neither of the parties can be said to have some sort of right — human or otherwise — to his money. We might think it mean or callous if he failed to aid either, but we are unlikely to say that he failed in a duty that corresponds to a right that one of the parties has to his money.

To accept such an argument would be to commit oneself to the implausible claim that putting the well-being of one's fellow group members first countenances, all else being equal, aiding others according to racist and homophobic principles. Thus, accepting that the content of special obligations should be limited by universal moral principles to, say, the provision of welfare allows the possibility that one can have a moral obligation to act along racist lines in the provision of such benefits. To claim that special moral obligations permit such motives to be considered legitimate is nonsensical.

Such an argument that appeals to external moral principles as limiting the content of special obligations seems, ultimately, to get matters around the wrong way. It is such obligations between racists, homophobes, Mafiosi and the like (whatever the content of such obligations) that we want to rule out from the start. We do not merely want to say that such moral obligations exist but are somehow outweighed in the balance of things when they offend against other moral values. Rather, we should want to do exactly the opposite of Tamir and deny that such obligations ever came into existence.⁵ Thus, if a member of the Ku Klux Klan renounces his ways we do not hold him responsible for breaking moral obligations to others, because it would be a fundamental misunderstanding to say that such obligations ever existed at all. What the defender of nationality requires, then, is a way in which to rule in obligations to friends, family, and the nation, but to rule them out between xenophobes, homophobes, and the like. Moreover this must be a way that rules out obligations between the latter kind of individuals at a more fundamental level than the position considered so far.

IV. GENERAL PRINCIPLES AS FOUNDATIONS

A more plausible response to the example of the Chingford Skinhead is possible, and to my mind it seems a more accurate explanation of special obligations (though I do not believe that it supports national obligations). This response accepts the criticism of the previous section that certain relationships or groups fail to give rise to legitimate obligations, and claims instead that only relationships that are morally valuable can be capable of generating special responsibilities. Thus, moral value is deemed as the property that familial and national relationships possess, but racist ones do not. By morally valuable I mean that a relationship or group must meet some external standard such as justice for obligations to exist.

In a similar vein Caney (1996) draws a useful distinction between what he terms value-independent and value-dependent arguments for obligations. A value-independent argument claims that there exist special duties to other members of a group irrespective of the moral worth of that group. Tamir's position clearly falls within this category. A value-dependent argument, conversely, claims that 'one can have special obligations only if that group is morally acceptable. Membership in a group might be morally acceptable because that group is just and fair, for example' (Caney, p. 120).

This is instructive because it provides possible grounds for discerning what it is that allows relationships such as friendship and family to generate special obligations that we commonly regard as legitimate, but does not do so with groups of racists. On the whole we consider families to be morally worthy associations. They contribute significantly to our identities, and their workings should, ideally, be just and fair. On those occasions when, regrettably, families do harbour a serious injustice — for example, when a parent is abusing a child — then we say that the relationship in question lacks the moral acceptability to create binding obligations.⁶

When Bernard Williams (1981) stated that the man who wonders 'should I throw the last life-belt to my drowning wife or to the drowning stranger?' has one thought too many, he captured (albeit in a tongue-in-cheek manner) the moral value of familial ties that give rise to obligations. Had the example been one of a racist debating whether to throw the life-belt to a drowning fellow racist or to a Jew, we would not hesitate in saying that no special obligation to the fellow racist exists, and that such grounds should not figure in his deliberation regarding his course of action.

Can those who endorse national obligations escape the criticism of the Chingford Skinhead example by embracing moral acceptability as necessary for special obligations? Indeed, the advocate of nationality might claim that a value-dependent argument for special obligations merely supports the existence of those obligations at the level of the nation. Thus, all that I would have achieved is merely to have strengthened the criteria for national obligations and sentiment so that it rules out the unpalatable aspects of nationalism that the defenders of the argument are keen to reject. If this claim is correct then the rest of White's position concerning education and nationality remains relatively undamaged by my criticism.

Such a response is problematical for two reasons. First, given his description of national obligations and a national education White appears to preclude an appeal to moral acceptability or general moral principles in such a way. I consider this criticism of value-dependency in the next section and argue that it is capable of meeting White's objections. Second, in order to accept value-dependency the defender of nationality must provide an adequate account of what property the nation possesses that makes it, like the family, a morally valuable relationship. It is to this question that we now turn.

It is possible to view the identity argument offered by proponents of nationality as attempting to provide such grounds for moral value and thereby bridge this gap. If the nation can be portrayed as vital to personal identity then perhaps this demonstrates why the nation is ethically significant:

Belonging to a nation is not essential to personal well-being, perhaps, but it can contribute to that end. A large part of the social, cultural, economic and political framework of our lives is the national community. Across the world we find national governments managing national economies, running national education, health and welfare systems [...] For many of us the work that we do, our attachments to other people, our personal interests, our values would lose much of their point if this national framework were removed. We need it to make sense of our lives, to help us toward a sense of who we are. It is in this way that nationality is important for personal identity. (White, pp. 330–1)

There are several reasons to find these claims problematic. First, it seems empirically mistaken to attribute responsibility to the nation for education, health, and welfare. In the modern world it is predominantly the state that shoulders the burden for the framework that White mentions. Moreover, as political scientists are keen to point out, even the idea that the state bears much responsibility for economic management is undergoing serious challenge from the globalisation thesis. That national culture plays an important part in our personal identities similarly ignores the effects of an increasingly global community where national boundaries are crumbling under increases in technology and communication. As Caney states, 'it is implausible to claim that a person's nation is especially important for a person's self-development... This is especially true given increased communication and international interdependence' (p. 131). Whilst communal frameworks need not be denied as important for constituting personal identity, this still leaves open the question as to why the nation (as opposed to some other framework) is especially significant in performing this task.

Second, the claim that belonging to a nation can (perhaps) contribute to an individual's well-being is equivocal across several interpretations. The strict interpretation is that the nation always contributes to a person's well-being. This is surely untenable because, in opposition, it merely requires us to show that for some their well-being is not enhanced by nationality. Oscar Wilde and Salman Rushdie might be among the first to complain. The lax interpretation is that the nation does not always contribute to well-being, but merely *can* do so. Yet, given that there are cases where nationality has been detrimental to well-being, and obligations are said to flow from (a morally acceptable) nationality, are we to say that in some cases certain individuals do not have such obligations whilst others do? This is surely too weak for the national obligation argument that hoped to show that we all have such obligations.

The more plausible interpretation is that the defender of nationality is claiming that a nation has moral value if it contributes to the well-being

of some members, and from this we can conclude that certain special obligations flow to all members. Thus, the nationalist claims that we should not confuse how we explain the value of a nation with what follows from a valuable nation for co-nationals. For the reasons given above I find such a claim, on the whole, unconvincing, because it leaves us asking once again why it is the nation that should occupy this role in preference to another framework.⁷ The mere existence of nations is not justification of their ethical significance. It may be possible to formulate nationality along value-dependent lines, so that its possible contribution to well-being renders it morally acceptable. I have no definitive argument to refute all possible future permutations, though I do believe the objections above render the argument in its present form implausible. Moreover, if nationality could be reformulated along value-dependent lines then I think it would be a substantially different doctrine to the one we currently have, and the resulting community would be markedly different from what we understand by the term 'nation' and would scarcely deserve the name.

V. A COMMUNITY OF PRINCIPLE

In making his argument for nationality and a national education White juxtaposes his view of a national community with what he terms a 'community of principle'. Such a community, with its emphasis on general moral principles, is incapable, so White claims, of binding individuals together, or of motivating them to abide by such principles. On this account nationality serves as an instrument by which to motivate individuals with the aim of promoting egalitarian distributive goals. In this section I turn to consider the community of principle in greater detail, and to argue that it does not succumb to the objections White raises. Instead I argue that such a community can both be attractive and provide the necessary motivation to accomplish its own principled ends. My remarks to this effect are, by necessity, brief, and do no more than point in such a general direction.

Even if general moral principles can provide the framework from which obligations derive legitimacy (in the value-dependent fashion), this is not an option available to White. In fact such a community based on direct attachment to principles is directly rejected: 'Is a community bound together by attachment to principles conceivable? Perhaps. But for many people, including myself, it would not be an attractive one' (White, p. 332). The implications for education that are the logical extension of White's position are in direct opposition to what he perceives as a curriculum designed according to universal principles. Such an education of principle, states White, places emphasis on civic matters such as rights and responsibilities, equality, justice, democracy, public services, and other principles pertaining to citizenship (p. 338). The focus of this education would be more on universal principles than on particularistic ties and relationships.

It is a little unclear exactly what White means or envisages by the idea of a community of principle. At one point he indicates that it might

include some form of civic friendship or fraternity which includes the encouraging of 'attachments to the democratic polity itself' (p. 331), and which is a noble aim in itself, but is conceptually (and practically) difficult to separate from promoting attachments to the nation. Liberal theorists such as John Rawls (1993) and Ronald Dworkin (1986) have argued for what might be called communities of principle in this sense. Dworkin, for example, states that a community where individuals see the laws under which they live as a compromise between their competing interests is merely a *bare* community. To be a full community of principle — what Dworkin calls a *true* community — individuals must come to see their obligations to one another as not being exhausted by their obedience to laws, but as requiring some form of fraternal attachment. That is, citizens must see the laws under which they live as depending 'more generally, on the scheme of principles these decisions presuppose and endorse. So each member accepts that the others have rights and duties flowing from that scheme, even though these have never been formally identified or declared' (Dworkin, p. 211). For Dworkin, as for Rawls, a community based on principle is both conceptually possible and attractive. The practical difficulty of separating attachments to community from attachments to nation can be answered simply by pointing out that this is the very task of education.

According to Rawls (1971), who shares a similar principled view, one's attachments and duties to a community of principle — like one's attachments and duties to one's family — are part of what he terms a natural duty of justice. On this account we have a natural duty to uphold just institutions and relationships, and thus this provides an explanation of why only relationships or groups that are morally acceptable (i.e. meet the requirements of justice) give rise to legitimate special obligations. Seen in this light the moral acceptability demanded by the value-dependent argument is reliant upon the relationship or group in question being one that could be characterised as falling under a natural duty of justice. Rawls elaborates:

From the standpoint of justice as fairness [Rawls' theory of justice], a fundamental natural duty is the duty of justice. This duty requires us to support and to comply with just institutions that exist and apply to us. It also constrains us to further just arrangements not yet established, at least when this can be done without too much cost to ourselves. Thus if the basic structure of a society is just, or as just as it is reasonable to expect in the circumstances, everyone has a natural duty to do his part in the existing scheme. Each is bound to these institutions independent of his voluntary acts, performative or otherwise.⁸ (Rawls, 1971, p. 115)

White is correct to point out that such a community does not show the same intimacy between individuals or between individuals and institutions as does nationality and national community, and that attachment to principles does not flow out of citizenship as such:

The question arises why these feelings are directed specifically towards members of this community instead of towards injustice and misfortune elsewhere in the world. The answer may be that one has a greater chance of doing more good at the local level than globally: the levers of action are easier to operate. This would be to look at the matter as perhaps a utilitarian would. It would seem to imply that if the levers were different, if through some technology which we cannot now imagine politicians in this community were better able to help people in some distant country than those around them, this is what they should do. (White, p. 332)

White draws an analogy between this example of an attachment to principle at the level of the political community, and the family: 'I would not like to be a younger member of a family bonded in a similar principle orientated way, aware that my parents were attentive to my needs not out of affection but only because they saw this as a parental duty' (p. 332). I believe that the analogy with the family is misleading, and that the stark choice between particularism and impartiality that White portrays is not the dilemma he believes it to be. We are, as we have seen, capable of acknowledging certain particularistic ties, such as those to family, as legitimate, whilst at the same time we are apt to regard such duties to members of the same race as illegitimate. In order to deflect White's criticism it is necessary to show that moral principles can be limited in their range of applicability on something other than merely a contingent basis.

Jeremy Waldron (1993) provides such an argument for the duty of justice by defending the idea that a principle of justice can be intended to apply only to certain people ('insiders') and not to others ('outsiders').⁹ Thus we might imagine that a principle of justice is range-limited and the responsibility for its implementation is held by a certain institution (for principles cannot administer themselves). According to Waldron since it is the point of the institution to administer the principle (perhaps among others), an individual, A, marks herself as an insider in relation to the institution if and only if it is part of the point of that institution to do justice to some claim of A among all the claims with which it deals.¹⁰ In this way we can explain how certain institutions (rather than institutions generally) apply to us, and why we have a duty to uphold such institutions that apply to us rather than to attempt to uphold institutions regardless of where they might be. Of course, compatible with this is a duty not to undermine the administration of a principle by a given (just) institution, and this is not limited to institutions that only apply to us, but to institutions generally.¹¹

For the proponent of a natural duty of justice, then, White's objection that the community of principle does not show the same intimacy as does nationality is to misunderstand the relationship in which individuals stand to justice. I do not propose to offer any detailed defence of Waldron's argument, but outline it only to show the possibility of a principled reply to White's objection that a community of principle is a contingent community. Thus, as Waldron states, the

distinction between insiders and outsiders to a given principle of justice depends not on sentiment, contingency or opportunity, but upon the difference between being an individual in respect of whose interests a just institution is just, and being an individual who is outside this, but who is nevertheless capable of interfering with a just institution (Waldron, pp. 18–19). Moreover, once seen in this light, the criticism that general principles alone are incapable of moral motivation seems misplaced. We do not need to feel some form of sympathy or compassion in order to have a legitimate moral duty not to kill, harm, or steal from another individual, and the duty to uphold just institutions (which apply principles of justice directly) can be interpreted in a similar manner.

What the natural duty of justice view might mandate, however, is a more thoroughgoing cosmopolitanism than White's nationality allows for. If, as a community, we are primarily concerned with general moral principles, such as justice and fairness, then we are likely to hear their claims wherever they might be. We are less likely to favour our own in preference to those outside our community merely because special obligations dictate that the well-being of those who are members of our group should have priority. As Waldron notes, the idea of a natural duty might mean that outsiders sometimes have legitimate claims to be treated as insiders (p. 17, n. 30). For example, a Bangladeshi might legitimately claim that the principle of justice to which we are insiders should be changed so as to favour a greater global redistribution of wealth in order to relieve famine in Bangladesh.

If the 'community of principle' is interpreted to mean something akin to the above, and to be based upon a natural duty of justice (including the duty to uphold just institutions), then we can legitimately claim that this community, which White sees as opposing a national community, is a possibility. A community of principle is in addition attractive, I believe, because not only does it demonstrate the compatibility of justice and communal obligations, it also provides accounts of both moral motivation (without problematical claims of ties of sentiment), and deals more directly than nationality with certain global issues. Obviously the brief remarks made to this effect have done no more than point in such a direction.

VI. NATIONALITY IN EDUCATION REVISITED

This section addresses two remaining tasks. The first is to outline the implications for the role of nationality in education once nationality has been emptied of ethical significance. The second is to indicate, albeit briefly, the educational implications of a community of principle. The following remarks are, by necessity, skeletal in nature. I shall merely point towards a number of features that are consistent with the above interpretation of the community of principle, rather than claiming any strict entailment. In so doing, however, I shall make reference to a number of features contained in the recommendations of the Advisory Group on Citizenship's *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of*

Democracy in Schools (1998). I believe this report is not only consistent with or complimentary to this wider position, but also exhibits similar motivations to the idea of a community of principle.

In practice it is likely that part of the content of the curriculum White describes will remain similar to that of the community of principle that he sees as opposing his view. Given the historical significance of the nation, nationalism and the like (and the continued importance these concepts are likely to have) this is unsurprising. However, the differences between these curricula are likely to be based upon the different *emphasis* that nationality has in each of the educational programmes. The question of emphasis can cause the understandings that individuals take away from a curriculum to vary enormously. In White's curriculum nationality has both historical and ethical significance; in a community of principle it has only historical significance. Many of the historical landmarks, such as the Act of Union that White mentions, can be seen not only as events that constituted the British nation, but also, when taken in larger context, as telling us much about injustice and oppression, and about the conflicting views people have on these issues. Similarly, the history of the world wars imparts an understanding of the vulgarity of a rampant nationalism and racism that rejects toleration and difference.

The point of such examples is not to show how we came to be who we are (though historically this is important). The purpose is somewhat deeper than this: by thinking and learning about the nation (and nationality) we learn how an arbitrary boundary — the national boundary — has come to have such a deep and formative effect on the manner in which we deliberate about and see our place in the world. Education can unmask this arbitrary distinction and help individuals see that injustice is injustice wherever it occurs, as well as providing the motivation to act directly upon the causes of injustice. Without this recognition we deprive ourselves of any principled way of attempting to persuade other people that we should be concerned for the well-being of all persons regardless of geography or group membership.

This does not mean that we cannot or should not emphasise our own history or politics; such an emphasis is consistent with the community of principle described above. To do otherwise would be ludicrous if not impossible. What it does mean is that one eye should always be kept on the larger picture, and, when weighing people's rights in the balance, we should weigh the claims of all persons equally. As Nussbaum (1997, p. 11) states:

One of the greatest barriers to rational deliberation in politics is the unexamined feeling that one's own preferences and ways are neutral and natural. An education that takes national boundaries as morally salient too often reinforces this kind of irrationality by lending to what is an accident of history a false air of moral weight and glory.

Perhaps such a de-emphasising of nationality in education does mean, in part, a greater cosmopolitan emphasis. Yet a greater cosmopolitan

emphasis within education does not imply that we need eschew all local ties or particularistic attachments. As White notes (p. 338) the National Curriculum Council's *Education for Citizenship* (1990) promotes the family as particularly worthy of educational emphasis, and as an essential component of a fully developed citizenship. Education has an important role in helping to foster an understanding not only of familial ties, but of other personal and intimate relationships, how they are intrinsically valuable, and how they constitute an essential part of individual identity.¹²

If a community of principle is interpreted as something similar to the Rawlsian or Dworkinian versions, then education assumes a fundamental role not only in helping future citizens to develop a sense of justice, but in understanding how this fits with their own comprehensive conception of the good life. For Rawls such an education of principle is a civic education in that it teaches the attitudes and ways of viewing the social world that are derived from a (political) conception of justice. This includes an emphasis on developing a sense of civility and tolerance, reasonableness and a sense of fair play (Rawls, 1993, pp. 194–5), in addition to mutual respect and a spirit of compromise in public matters¹³ (Rawls, 1993, p. 163).

White is correct, it seems, to suggest that a community attached to principles might well include a form of civic education which fosters an attachment to the democratic polity itself (rather than an attachment to fellow nationals). Developing a sense of justice and an understanding of rights and responsibilities, along with an emphasis on ideals such as freedom and equality, are all valid aims of a liberal civic education according to thinkers such as Dworkin and Rawls. What is more, this is a position echoed recently in the Advisory Group in Citizenship's *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools* (1998) (hereafter, *Education for Citizenship*):

The purpose of citizenship education in schools and colleges is to make secure and to increase the knowledge, skills and values relevant to the nature and practices of participatory democracy; also to enhance the awareness of rights and duties, and the sense of responsibilities needed for the development of pupils into active citizens; and in so doing to establish the value to individuals, schools and society of involvement in the local and wider community. (Section 6.6)

Interestingly, *Education for Citizenship* shows not only a concern for a greater understanding of interpersonal relationships within society and a basic comprehension of the workings of the state, but also a deeper appreciation of the values, dispositions and principles that reside beneath the surface of these matters. The focus is explicitly on the teaching, understanding and application of ideas such as democracy, equality, fairness, justice, rights, responsibilities, and co-operation, as well as how these relate to controversial issues and the methods of resolution in a society where people hold different and often conflicting viewpoints.¹⁴ (3.6)

Some of *Education for Citizenship*'s recommendations concerning citizenship and democracy through subject teaching provide interesting

counter-examples to the curriculum based on nationality. The subject of History, for example, can serve as a vehicle for understanding a variety of contemporary, as well as historical, issues:

In History, there is much teaching and learning about the development of societies and of political, social and economic systems, including the development of British democracy and of our pluralist society, which provides *an essential conceptual and institutional foundation to many elements in our learning outcomes*. For example, the history of Parliament is at the heart of British history and can readily lead into discussion of present day electoral arrangements. Meanwhile, British, European and world history topics can also lead into consideration of the international, sustainable development and the human rights aspects of our learning outcomes. The emphasis in History on the use of evidence and processes of enquiry can help pupils to discuss and reach informed judgements about topical and contemporary issues which are the lifeblood of citizenship and to develop the confidence to take informed action. (7.4, emphasis added)

Similarly, Geography imparts an understanding of 'place, space and environment', and an ability to map local issues onto a global context and vice versa. In particular there is the 'opportunity to understand how people and places are inextricably linked and interdependent, thus to learn about and experience citizenship from the local to the global' (7.5). Furthermore, the study of English provides the arena for the development of communication between individuals through both printed sources (books, plays, poems and newspapers) and oral and visual sources (radio, television, and newer forms of communication technologies), as well as through 'drama, role-play, literary criticism and media education.' *Education for Citizenship* continues: 'One common example is reading Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Is it a lament for the failed attempt to create an egalitarian society, or an implication that it was and always is impossible?'¹⁵ (7.6)

Whilst I do not claim that the suggestions of *Education for Citizenship* are the logical implications of a community of principle, it is possible to acknowledge that they are consistent with such an understanding of political community. The aim of this section has been to illustrate the conceptual possibility of a community of principle, one that is consistent with a variety of liberal views concerning the purpose and content of education. The task of education is the task of separating, in White's words, an attachment to a democratic polity from an attachment to the nation. This may be a difficult task, but its difficulty is not sufficient for allowing us to abandon the task of putting nationality in its place as an extremely important historical phenomenon but not an ethically significant one.

VII. CONCLUSION

In this article I have argued against the claims made by White in defence of the ethical significance of nationality and its implications for

education, by rejecting the basis upon which obligations between fellow nationals are said to arise. In response I have claimed that group membership as the sole criterion for special obligations (the value-independent view) saddles us with the implausible position of recognising moral obligations between members of groups whose practices and ideals we regard as unpalatable. In opposition to this view of nationality I have argued that the only plausible defence of special obligations is one that takes the moral acceptability of the group as central in determining whether obligations exist or not. Thus I have defended what Caney terms the value-dependent view of obligations. Furthermore, I have presented a number of arguments for thinking it unlikely that the nationality thesis can be reformulated along such lines so as to avoid my initial objection. In particular I have claimed that, even if such an option were available to nationality in general, White's own position precludes such a possibility.

In addition to the main emphasis on overturning the claims made concerning national obligations I have also argued that the so-called community of principle that is seen as standing in opposition to the national community is both conceptually feasible and potentially attractive. The remarks made to this effect have, by necessity, been merely directional in nature rather than detailed. Similarly, I have suggested (following what I believe to be the motivation behind the *Education for Citizenship* report) that the appropriate role for education is a civic one, and that only the historical importance of the nation is educationally significant.

Those of us on the left of the political spectrum that White seems to desire to convince should, I think, be wary of the Siren call of nationality that promises to do our work for us. The emphasis on nationality and national sentiment is both morally dangerous and, ultimately, subversive of the worthy goals, such as justice and equality of respect, that its defenders set out to serve. These goals, I believe, are better served by appealing direct to the principles themselves, even if this means the breaking down of traditional boundaries in favour of a more cosmopolitan approach. Unlike White I am neither shocked nor disappointed that the 1988 National Curriculum or the NCC's (1990) *Education for Citizenship* bear little or no reference to nationality. White states that, 'the family is in, even though the nation is out' (p. 338). And with good reason too I think. On the whole families are morally worthy relationships and the moral obligations to which they give rise are legitimate ones.

Correspondence: David Stevens, School of Politics, University of Nottingham, Nottingham NG7 2RD, UK.

NOTES

I would like to thank Matthew Clayton and David Estlund for their excellent written comments on earlier drafts of this paper, and the two anonymous referees of this journal for their comments on the final draft.

1. This is a distinction first captured by Miller (1988).
2. See also Miller (1995) pp. 22–7.
3. My objection allows, for the sake of argument, that it may be possible for certain special obligations to exist in virtue of the relationships people share, but which are not necessarily freely chosen (such as some obligations between family members). Thus, my criticism is not of the type that Scheffler terms ‘voluntarism’. For further elucidation of this and other distinctions, see Scheffler (1994).
4. Thus the defender of nationality hopes to defend the idea that national identity establishes obligations, and that these obligations are of a certain kind (such as to provide welfare, etc. to fellow nationals) but not of other kinds (such as to aid fellow nationals in attacking a foreigner).
5. For elaboration of this criticism see Caney (1996). See also Scanlon (1998, pp. 156–7) for a discussion of a similar criticism of moral obligations.
6. Abuse of a child by a parent does not, of course, destroy other special obligations that arise from the family, such as, for example, obligations that are said to exist between siblings. Of course some degree of flexibility is required when interpreting when moral acceptability influences the creation of binding moral obligations (though such questions of levels of injustice are beyond the boundaries of this paper). It might be claimed that such a position commits an individual to saying that she has no obligation to the father who abused her as a child regardless of what she feels to the contrary (I thank an anonymous referee for this point). I believe this is partly correct. If the individual has been seriously abused as a child I think we might agree that she has no *moral* obligation to her father (and she would be mistaken in thinking she did), but that she may legitimately feel some form of loyalty to him despite past events. We might view this individual’s care of her father in his dotage as highly commendable morally, but this is very different to claiming that she has an obligation to care for him (failure to perform which would mean she was susceptible to moral condemnation).
7. This is not so of the family where it is virtually impossible to imagine some other institution or framework, other than a family-like institution or framework, meeting the ends that we attribute to the family. This can be seen by imagining two possible worlds: one devoid of families, the other devoid of nations. We are likely, when faced with a choice between the two, to choose the latter, as we can more easily imagine some other framework providing the ends that the nation currently provides. The role of the family is — unlike the nation — intrinsically bound up with its existence. For more on the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction see Thomas Donaldson (1993).
8. Rawls continues that, being independent of a person’s acts or intentions, the duty to uphold just institutions is like other, more familiar, natural duties: ‘The duty to help another when he is in need or jeopardy, provided that one can do so without excessive risk or loss to oneself; the duty not to harm or injure another; and the duty not to inflict unnecessary suffering’ (Rawls, 1971, p. 114).
9. Such a range limited principle of justice is easy to demonstrate. Imagine that H is deliberating how to divide a cake between his children. H decides that the fairest method is according to the principle ‘to each an equal amount of cake’. The astute child from next door points out that under such a principle she too is entitled to a piece of cake. H’s obvious reply is that the principle was only intended to apply to H’s own children (the insiders) and not to people generally (the outsiders). Such a restriction might be based on a good reason, for example, that the child next door has already had cake and does not need more, or that it is a local custom that people do not feed cake to other people’s children. I borrow this example from Waldron (1993) p. 12.
10. Here I summarise Waldron (1993) p. 15.
11. Thus, whilst I may have a duty to uphold the just institutions of Britain (because they apply to me) I do not have the same duty to the institutions of New Zealand. However, I do have a duty not to undermine the (just) institutions of New Zealand. Waldron illustrates this with the example of the sinking of Greenpeace’s ship the *Rainbow Warrior* in Auckland Harbour by the French secret service.
12. For example, see P. White (1990), and Nussbaum (1997). Nussbaum argues (regarding the family) that education helps us gain enormous insights into how the family affects personal identity by turning our gaze outwards from our own culture (where the two-parent format is considered the natural format). We can understand much more about our own conception of

the family by noting that different familial configurations exist, and that the housewife and working-husband setup is by no means the usual, let alone the only, format. Moreover, this allows us to view and assess the variety of responses available to issues germane to our own society, such as the division of labour, child care, child abuse, laws regarding ownership of property, and so forth.

13. See also Rawls (1993) p. 199 for further elaboration of what, on this view, are the requirements of an education based on principle.
14. These aims are manifested in three ways in *Education for Citizenship*: (1) a willingness and empathy to perceive and understand the interests, beliefs and viewpoints of others; (2) a willingness and ability to apply reasoning skills to problems and to value a respect for truth and evidence in forming and holding opinions; (3) a willingness and ability to participate in decision-making, to value freedom, to choose between alternatives, and to value fairness as a basis for making and judging decisions (10.6).
15. *Education for Citizenship* continues, regarding Orwell's *Animal Farm*, thus: 'The critical, open-ended reading and discussion of a text is a skill very close to our "critical approach to evidence put before one and ability to look for fresh evidence"'. Meanwhile, drama, role-play and stories can be excellent means to help pupils develop the "ability to consider and appreciate the experience of others"' (6.6). *Education for Citizenship* also mentions, in addition, extra-curricular activities and learning, such as community involvement and student participation in formal school matters as a means to foster both citizenship and democracy. It describes Windsor County Primary School in Toxteth, Liverpool, as especially noteworthy for its use of pupil councils in fostering an understanding of democracy, procedural matters, and respect for difference. Such councils act as microcosms for democracy and society — encouraging participation on a scale where results are clearly noticeable, and where shirking is difficult to hide (2.11).

REFERENCES

- Advisory Group on Citizenship (Chair, Bernard Crick) (1998) *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools* (London, HMSO).
- Caney, S. (1996) Individuals, nations and obligations, in: S. Caney, D. George and P. Jones (eds), *National Rights, International Obligations* (Oxford, Westview Press).
- Donaldson, T. (1993) Morally privileged relationships, in: D. Meyers, D. Kipnis and C. Murphy (eds), *Kindred Matters: Rethinking the Philosophy of the Family* (London, Cornell University Press).
- Dworkin, R. (1986) *Law's Empire* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press).
- Miller, D. (1988) The ethical significance of nationality, *Ethics* 98.4.
- Miller, D. (1995) *On Nationality* (Oxford, Clarendon Press).
- National Curriculum Council (1990) *Education for Citizenship: Curriculum Guidance 8*.
- Nussbaum, M. (1997) *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism* (Boston, Beacon Press).
- Rawls, J. (1971) *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).
- Rawls, J. (1993) *Political Liberalism* (New York, Columbia University Press).
- Raz, J. (1989) Liberating duties, *Law and Philosophy* 8.
- Scanlon, T. (1998) *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press).
- Scheffler, S. (1994) *Families, Nations and Strangers*, The Lindley Lectures (Kansas, University of Kansas).
- Tamir, Y. (1993) *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton, Princeton University Press).
- Waldron, J. (1993) Special ties and natural duties, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 22.
- White, J. (1996) Education and nationality, *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 30.3.
- White, P. (1990) Friendship and education, *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 24.1.
- Williams, B. (1981) *Moral Luck* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).